

Couples Become Teams at Work

By Doug Imberi, DDJC Public Affairs



Robert and Sylvia

at the Clothing & Textile (C&T) Warehouses, productivity is up between 400 and 550 percent on lines packed.

According to C&T supervisor Robert Vidabel there are several factors that account for the increase—chemistry, loyalty and personal integrity. “They know what each other is going to do without communicating,” Vidabel said. “They know where they want to go and have a strong commitment to each other to excel.”

The Tankersleys and Heincys were packers and part of a much larger team in the Bulk Division’s Less-Than-Truckload (LTL) packing operation in Warehouse 16. After volunteering in late summer to work in Warehouses 5 and 6 to pack C&T, neither couple has any regrets.

The Tankersleys met in 1987 when they worked together as packers in the LTL area. They have been married 12 years. The Heincys were married 17 years ago. Gary worked several different jobs at several different federal installations for 17 years. Lorna was hired a year ago after working in the private sector.

Both couples volunteered to work in C&T if they could work together as a team. At first Bulk Division Chief Joe Perry

Together, both on and off the job, has produced more than just two happy marriages in the clothing and textile warehouses at Defense Distribution Depot San Joaquin, CA (DDJC). It has sent productivity to new heights. Before packers Robert and Sylvia Tankersley and Gary and Lorna Heincy came to Warehouses 5 and 6, packers were producing about 120 lines daily. Since the Tankersleys and Heincys arrived

didn’t like the idea. However, he was willing to try it, and let productivity be the determining factor.

“On the LTL floor you worked as an individual,” recalled Robert. “Here we work as a team, which is best for the type of material we are working. At first it was disorganized, until we figured out a process.”

The system that works for the Tankersleys is for Robert to do the packing and Sylvia input the Distribution Standard System (DSS) data. “We learned the same method of packing from the old packers,” said Robert. “So if I start something, Sylvia can finish it.”

On heavy days when a lot of tickets are dropped, both couples will put in 12-hour days. “If we can come in early like 4 a.m., things don’t pile up and we can stay on top of it,” said Gary.

However, the long hours do not take a toll on their relationship. “When we go home we never talk about work,” Sylvia said. “We don’t let home influence work and we don’t let work influence home.”

“We spend a lot of time talking on the way to and from work,” said Gary. “When we get home we spend time with the kids. We are close.”

“We really enjoy being here at work together,” added Lorna. “If one of us takes the day off, it makes the day seem really slow.”

However, they also have days when the chemistry is not as good as others. “We never wish we weren’t working together,” said Gary. “We just wish we didn’t come to work.”

“Some days we don’t work together,” said Sylvia.

“Some days we don’t talk,” said Robert. “We don’t say a word.” But those days don’t come often and are easily overlooked.

“I hope we can stay here,” noted Lorna.

“I could stay right here (Warehouse 6) with [Sylvia] until I retire,” said Robert.

Colledge DLA Suggestion Award Winner

Debra Colledge, Traffic Management Specialist, Defense Distribution Depot Hill, Utah (DDHU), proposed to use the Document Automation and Production Service (DAPS) to perform document imaging.

At the time of submittal, DLA had made a joint decision with the Air Force to have distribution centers perform document control for certain Air Force system products in addition to sustaining current workload. This would have mandated the purchase of additional equipment and allocating supplementary manpower for multiple centers.

Colledge’s suggestion identified using DAPS as an alternative. Adoption of her suggestion has resulted in eliminating several manpower positions, numerous new equipment requirements and related maintenance costs as well as providing top-quality services to customers. This suggestion has successfully contributed to the effectiveness and improvement of DDHU operations and has been implemented DLA wide.



VADM Lippert presents Debra Colledge with the DLA Suggestion Award. Phil Steely, DLA Executive Director, center right, and MSGT Turner far right.